No. 67

# The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

He was at the end of his wits. The latest reports from the private detectives in his employ were to the effect that no trace of the first Mrs. Gordon could be found.

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Cincinnati, Ohio.

WITH that much available cash back of him he could speedily end the trouble at the copper mines and start anew. Quite naturally Phil wanted to know of Mr. Shields why he came to his assistance when even his closest friends had refused him a loan.

"Your father did me a good turn once," replied the old lawyer, although it was a deliberate lie. "I have never forgotten it. And it is for that reason I want to help you, my boy."

Gordon accepted the statement at its face value. While he could not remember that his father and Mr. Shields had been friends, he did not feel inclined to question it.

Little did he suspect who was behind the loan. What if he had known that his dearly beloved first wife was furnishing the money.

The legal formalities were disposed of in a few days.

The agreement signed by both parties was, that Gordon would pay back the money in ten annual instalments, and without interest.

With feverish haste Phil started on another trip to the copper mines. At least he could travel without worrying about his children.

This care had been taken off his hands by the return of Marie Desmond, the governess.

Not only was this very efficient woman able to take the proper care of the children, but of the entire household as well.

"Now you must mind Miss Desmond as you would mind your mother if she were here," had been his last admonition to Harry and Phyllis. "Don't let me hear any complaints when I get back."

Both of the children had promised faithfully not

to offend their governess by being disobedient.

From behind the curtain of a window on the second floor, Marie had watched the departure of her former husband, her eyes nearly blinded by tears.

It made her heart feel good to see him smile with renewed hope and enthusiasm.

It was the next day that one of the maids came into the nursery to announce that one of the charity nurses had called to see her.

Marie was somewhat surprised. Why should a charity nurse call on her? After a moment's thought she concluded that this must be a mistake.

No doubt the nurse came to solicit financial aid for some worthy institution or cause from the master of Oak Manor.

As Phil Gordon was away, she decided to give in his stead. With her purse under her arm, Marie went downstairs and found the visitor in the reception room.

"You came to see Mr. Gordon, I suppose," she said with a very pleasant smile and holding out her hand.

The nurse seemed startled at the sound of that voice. She rose quickly to take the outstretched hand, and her eyes scrutinized the features of the speaker.

"If you are Miss Desmond," she declared, "it is you I came to see."

And now it was Marie's turn to be startled.

She knew that voice. Her gaze traveled swiftly over the figure before her and rested on the face with the blue glasses.

"Who—who are you?" she asked, somewhat excitedly.

"I am Olive Carrel, one of the nurses from the Associated Charities in Chicago," the visitor answered.

"Yes, I know you are a nurse," said Marie.

"Your uniform tells me that. But your name is not——" She paused for a moment. "Won't you please take off those glasses and let me see your eyes?"

The request was complied with at once. For a full minute the two women stared at each other.

"Julia!" the governess gasped. "Julia Carey!"

The nurse colored up and smiled.

"That's my real name," she admitted. "Yes, I am Julia Carey. And now will you tell me how you happened to recognize me? I am sure I have never seen you before. Your voice is very familiar and your figure and eyes remind me of my sister."

The governess walked to the door, closed it carefully and returned.

"Come, let us be seated," she said in a quivering tone. "I want you to tell me all about yourself. After that I will tell you why I am not a stranger to you."

When they were reclining in comfortable chairs an awkward silence prevailed for some time.

"So you would like to hear the story of my life, would you?" the nurse spoke at last. "Well, I don't mind telling it to you. But you will not find it entirely pleasant."

"It doesn't matter," the other woman replied in a strained voice. "The story I shall tell you may be less pleasant than yours, nurse. And I want you to know that my request is not the result of mere curiosity.

"I am intensely interested to know why you changed your name from Julia Carey to Olive Carrel. That is something I am utterly unable to understand."

The nurse rested her cheek against her hand.

"I — I hardly know where to begin," she murmured as if speaking to herself. "Well," she added aloud, "I may as well start by telling you where I was born and who my parents were. That will——"

"You were an actress once," Marie interrupted, "and a successful one. What I am particularly anxious to know is why you gave up your profession and became a charity nurse."

"Oh, that's it," grinned the nurse. "There is not much to tell, except that I learned a bitter lesson which changed the course of my whole life. It was all on account of a man who deceived me cruelly.

"He gave me the first push before I landed at the bottom of the social ladder. But you don't want to hear about that, do you?" Her voice had suddenly risen.

"I do," Marie declared. "Tell me about your stage successes and how you——"

"All right," the other broke in. "My name is Julia Carey. You know that much. I had a sister by the name of Marie Carey and two aunts. One of the aunts raised both of us.

"I always had an idea that I could act and was wild to go on the stage. I shall never forget how my aunts were horrified when they heard about my decision to go into the theatrical profession.

"I went to New York without saying goodby to them, and got an engagement almost at once. I was very happy indeed, for I was picked almost immediately as an understudy for one of the principal parts in a new play.

"Within six months the part was mine. Then I received an invitation to the wedding of my sister Marie. As luck would have it, we were booked for a long engagement in Chicago.

"I left a few days ahead of the company in order to be able to attend the wedding.

"It sure was a swell affair. My sister became Mrs. Gordon, and she married one of the finest men I ever knew. Philip Gordon was a prince. He——" here

the speaker paused and stared at her listener. "Why, what is the matter?"

The Gordon governess sat there with a face as white as chalk. It was plainly evident that she was in the throes of powerful emotion.

"Nothing," Marie answered, straightening up quickly and forcing a smile. "Please go on."

"After the wedding I went back to New York," the nurse continued. "I was making splendid headway in the profession and the manager of our company intimated that I would be starred in a production of my own next season.

"He gave me to understand that this new success of mine was due chiefly to his efforts in my behalf.

"I believed him. So when he asked me to go out to dinner with him one night after the performance, I consented, because I did not want to offend him. He took me to a swell restaurant and he treated me like a gentleman.

"After that we frequently dined together. By degrees I learned to love him. Then he gave a party at his apartment. Several members of the company were invited besides myself.

"The night was one I shall never forget. Talk about prohibition being in effect in New York? Why, I never saw so much wine and whiskey in all my life before as I did on that night.

"Everybody drank. And I, not being used to it, was the noisest of the crowd. They urged me to drink more, and finally I could hardly stand on my feet. Then suddenly I became aware that I was alone with the manager.

"I told him to take me home, but he would not hear of it. Then he began to make love to me. He promised to marry me the very next day, and, like a

fool, I believed him. The next morning I was ashamed to face my friends. I was not the same woman.

"Weeks passed by, and I had not the least idea when I would be married. I was put off every time I broached the subject to my lover.

"Then I realized one day that I was to become a mother. I went to the manager and demanded that he make good his promise. He laughed at me. Wild with disappointment and rage, I struck him. He had me ejected from his apartment by his valet.

"I went home and procured a gun. I was just about to enter the hall in the building in which he lived, when I saw him step from the elevator. Without saying a word, I whipped out my gun and fired.

"Then I ran. The next day I found out that he was only slightly hurt. I was not arrested, but I lost my position. For weeks I walked the streets looking for another.

"Every booking agency turned me down as soon as I told my name. Utterly discouraged and in despair, I saw a horrible future ahead of me.

"The baby died at the hospital where it was born. When at last I was able to leave, I was a mere shadow of my former self. I might have gone to my sister in Chicago, but I was too proud to acknowledge failure.

"What happened to me after that," the nurse continued, dropping her eyes to the floor, "had best be left unsaid. "I went the way of all fool women who give up the fight. There was plenty easy money to be made, and I got my share of it.

"From one city I drifted to another. Finally I landed in Chicago. And here a most strange thing happened to me.

"One night as I stood near the doorway of one of the fashionable clubs, I saw a well-dressed gentleman

coming out. He looked good to me, and I stopped him.

"Imagine my horror when I discovered that he was Philip Gordon, my own brother-in-law. He was as horrified as I was, and he had another gentleman with him. He was a doctor. I forgot his name.

"They took me to dinner in a nice restaurant. Phil was very nice to me. Although he knew that I had hit the gutter, he treated me like a lady.

"Before we parted he gave me all the money he had with him and told me to get out of Chicago on the next train.

"I suppose he was afraid that some of his high-brow friends would find out that his wife's sister had become a disgrace to the family.

"I promised him I would go to Hollywood, and that was really my intention. But something happened to cause me to change my mind.

"I caught a heavy cold. In a week I lay at the hospital with pneumonia. The doctor wanted to know my name so he could communicate with my relatives. Believing that I was going to die, I determined to keep my identity hidden.

"It was the only decent thing I could do. I did not want it to become known that the sister of Mrs. Philip Gordon died an outcast from all decent society.

"My name was recorded as Olive Carrel. And then came the dreadful hours when my breath grew very short. I was not ready to die. The charity nurse who had charge of my case, was a lovely woman. She asked me if I still knew how to pray.

"'Only prayer can help you, my dear,' she said gently.

"She folded her hands over mine, and with tears streaming down her face she asked God to take me and cleanse my sin-stained soul. I tried to follow her, and

managed to lisp the words she spoke.

"I did not want to die. It was then that I registered the solemn promise to the Almighty God, that my life should be devoted to His cause if I lived.

"Within a week I was on the way to recovery. As soon as I was able to leave the hospital, I made good my promise. I applied at the office of the Associated Charity for work.

"I am known as Nurse Olive Carrel, and I have found peace such as I never thought existed. I am now——"

"Tell me one thing," Marie interrupted at this point. "Why did you ignore your closest relatives while you were in Chicago. Why didn't you get in touch with the Gordons?"

"What would have been the use?" the nurse answered. "Do you think for a moment they would have tolerated me in their home after Phil found out how low I had fallen? Not much. And besides, I did not want them to know that they had cause to be ashamed of me."

"Did—did you never hear anything about them at any time?" was the next question.

"Oh, yes," came back promptly. "I heard a great deal about them after I became a charity nurse. But most of it was disagreeable news. My poor sister had her troubles, too.

"She left her husband and was killed later in an explosion. I heard also that Phil Gordon married Alice Procter, and that he was wretchedly unhappy with her.

"Of course, that did not surprise me," the charity nurse ended. "I knew Alice Gordon quite well when she was still the haughty Miss Procter. We grew up together and I never like her. She was a very selfish kind of a girl." She paused then repeated: "Yes, she was the most selfish girl I ever met."

"So she was and is still," the other woman agreed in a low, tense voice. "Alice has not changed one bit. If anything she is worse."

The nurse shook her head.

"Too bad poor Phil had to fall for a woman like her," she said. "He deserved something better when he went in search of a second wife. Well, that is about all I want to say about the Gordons and myself."

## Chapter 220

## "I AM YOUR SISTER!"

TO SAY that Marie Desmond had been amazed by the story told by this charity nurse, who was her own sister, would be putting it mildly. During the silence which had fallen she tried to come to some decision. Her heart went out in tender sympathy to this woman of her own flesh and blood.

But the former Julia Carey was obviously not in need of sympathy now, for her face shone with the peace that only true repentance can bring.

She had dedicated her life to the service of Him who once said to the multitude:

"Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone." And again: "Your sins are forgiven. Go hence and sin no more."

The two women were regarding one another curiously. The charity nurse had told her story and she was waiting to hear from the governess. The latter was not at all reluctant to unburden herself. She knew she could trust Julia.

"A moment ago," she began, her eyes focused on those of the nurse, "you mentioned the fact that your sister, the first Mrs. Gordon, lost her life in an explosion. Would it surprise you to hear that this did not happen, and that Marie Gordon is still alive and well?"

"Of course, it would," was the quick retort. "But it would be hard to believe. I have been told that my sister was buried in the little cemetery at Gary, Indiana, where the explosion occurred."

Marie moved closer and put a hand on the nurse's

shoulder. Her voice was toned down carefully as she said:

"Your sister was never buried. With a number of other unfortunates who were terribly injured, she was taken to the hospital. Her face had been mangled beyond recognition.

"One of the best physicians who had learned the art of plastic surgery in France during the world war, rebuilt that face. Here—" with a dramatic gesture at her features, "is the result."

The charity nurse sprang up.

"You—you mean to tell me that you are my sister Marie?" she gasped.

The answer was a nod.

"I am your sister."

The next instant the two women were in each other's arms and both wept. It took some time before they calmed down.

The charity nurse was first to resume the conversation.

"Now, you must tell me how you happened to come back here as a governess to your own children," she said. "And how did you manage to keep your identity hidden? Phil must have been blind not to recognize you. This is all so strange that I——"

"It was far easier than I anticipated," Marie interrupted, her voice still husky with tears. "Poor Phil was too engrossed in his domestic troubles to study me. The only one who recognized me was my former maid, Annie, who is still employed here. I made her promise not to reveal who I was."

For another hour the two sisters exchanged confidences.

Marie told how she came to Oak Manor for the first time, how she had been forced to leave, and why she

had returned.

Her cheeks glowed as she mentioned that Phil had confessed his love for her, not knowing that she was his former wife.

"What the future will bring, I am not prepared to say," she ended. "However, I shall remain at Oak Manor and take care of the children. Since Alice has gone, I have nothing to fear."

"Why don't you tell Phil Gordon who you are?" the charity nurse said. "I am sure I would if I were in your place."

Marie shok her head with determination.

"Not as long as he is still the husband of another woman," she responded. "If I did, he would move heaven and earth to procure a divorce from his second wife to remarry me. There would be no end of scandal, and he dreads scandal more than death.

"No, I am quite satisfied with conditions as they are for the present. I must be. Of course, it is hard to be near him and play the stranger, for I love him more than ever before."

"There is one thing you must promise me," she went on after a short pause. "No matter what happens, I am Marie Desmond, you understand, Julia?"

"And I am Olive Carrel, and not Julia Carey," the other retorted. "You must not call me by my right name. My soul was reborn in the hospital. My life henceforth is devoted to the service of humanity in distress."

Once more the two sisters embraced and they promised to protect one another's secret.

"Now I must tell you why I called here," the charity nurse spoke again. "At the present moment I am taking care of a poor woman by the name of Knight. She lives in a cottage beyond the village. She is in desperate circumstances.

"Her husband is a drunken brute who abuses her shamefully. Dr. Van Buren is treating her. He——"

"Dr. Van Buren?" Marie repeated, coloring slightly. "Oh, he is a wonderful man. I know him quite well."

"Yes, so he told me," Olive Carrel nodded. "He suggested that I get in touch with you. He said that perhaps poor Mrs. Knight might find a position of some kind at Oak Manor as soon as she is able to work."

Marie thought for a few moments.

"We could use a woman who can sew," she said. "Yes, I am quite sure we can. I'll engage Mrs. Knight, and if you don't object I'll call on her in a day or two."

"By all means do," the nurse encouraged. "And you will be agreeably surprised. Mrs. Knight is a refined sort of a young woman, and unusually pretty."

After another few minutes of confidential chatting the two sisters walked to the door arm in arm.

"You can tell Mrs. Knight that she will find a position at Oak Manor," were Marie's parting words. "And if anything is needed in the way of clothing or provisions, let me know."

"I can tell you that right now," the nurse replied. "The poor woman needs everything."

Marie ran for her purse and pressed a hundred dollar bill into her sister's hand with the promise that further financial aid would be forthcoming if needed at any time.

The next day she paid a visit to the cottage in which the Knights lived. She was received very pleasantly by the nurse.

"I didn't expect you to come so soon, my dear," the latter smiled.

"Why not Jul——" A quick motion from the nurse warned her. "Why not, Miss Carrel?" she cor-

rected hastily. "I am rather anxious to meet the woman who is to become a member of the Gordon household. How is Mrs. Knight?"

"A little better, I believe," was the answer.

As Marie was led to the bedside, she showed not a little amazement in her face. She was astonished at Ellen Knight's beauty. With a kindly greeting, she offered her her hand.

"I am very grateful for your goodness, and thank you for the place you are holding for me," Mrs. Knight said in tones which proved her sincerity. "You may be sure I will do everything I can to fill it properly and give you no cause to regret your kindness."

"That will be all right," said Marie softly. "But first of all you must get back your health. That comes before everything."

At this moment the bell rang.

The nurse went to the door to open, and came back with Dr. Van Buren.

While Marie held out her hand in some confusion, he looked quietly into her face, and said with calm friendliness:

"I am glad to see you back again, Miss Desmond. Especially for the children's sake. You are badly needed at Oak Manor."

"Yes, it was high time for me to come," she answered. "Harry is badly run down again. I will be going South with them soon to give the poor boy a chance to recover. I would be glad, doctor, if I could speak to you later in the week about the children."

Dr. Van Buren promised to come to see her.

Marie soon took her leave of the Ivy Cottage. She had not failed to notice the apparent change in Dr. Van Buren's attitude toward her and she rejoiced that he had overcome the effect of his disappointment when she

refused an offer of marriage from him.

At home, she was greeted clamorously by the children, who brought her a letter addressed to her by Phil.

Her hand trembled as she opened it. Every fibre of her heart tingled for love of him. There were but a few lines.

He inquired about the children, and wrote that he would soon return, as life at the mines did not seem to agree with him. He longed for his own Oak Manor.

Marie could discern a longing in every line. To be sure, he must miss the children.

She sat down at once to answer the letter. She could not explain it, but her reply seemed colder than she really wished it to appear.

She wrote with a peculiar restraint, and for that reason all that she said seemed stiff and formal.

She sighed with relief when she had concluded the letter which, as usual, when she wrote to Phil, was in a disguised handwriting.

In the meantime, dusk had fallen, and the lights were on in the corridors, when the sound of footsteps hurrying hither and thither reached her ears.

She was about to go to see what this meant, when Annie burst into the room with a terrified expression, and panted:

"Oh, Mrs. Gordon has arrived."

"Who?" asked Marie. "My God, Annie, you don't mean Alice!"

"Yes—yes," faltered the girl. "Now the troubles will begin all over again. She has just come home. Tom says she does not intend to stay long, but has come back to get her things for a long trip she is going to take. What will happen now?"

Marie paled. Her heart beat wildly. Alice's re-

appearance, so sudden and unexpected, was like a bolt from a clear sky.

She was filled by the same forebodings as Annie. What would happen? Alice did not know that she was back in Oak Manor.

A scene was inevitable, for Alice was mistress in the house. She could misuse her power as such and compel Marie to go while Phil was away. What could she do?

"We cannot help it, Annie," she said with quivering lips. "We cannot avoid the storm which will now break over me, but whatever happens, even if she drives me from the house, I will protect the children; she shall not touch a hair of their heads."

Harry and Phyllis had already learned the news and suddenly the door was opened and the children ran in, frightened and trembling.

Tears came to the boy's eyes at the mere memory of what his stepmother had made him suffer. Phyllis, too, clung to Marie, and the latter drew the children to herself.

"Don't be frightened children, I am with you and will not let you come to harm," she soothed.

"But if Mamma sends you away again?" cried Harry in his alarm. "Oh, I know it, I heard the servants say that mamma sent you away that time when Grandpa was so ill. Oh, I am afraid. She is bad——"

"Be quiet Harry, you must not say such things," interrupted Marie severely, while her heart was almost bursting with anxiety. "If your mamma wants to send me away again, then—I will take you children with me."

The children looked up at her in perplexity. Their little brains could not quite comprehend how their governess could take them with her, if "Mama" did not wish it.

Nevertheless, Marie succeeded in quieting them so they returned to their play.

But presently little Harry came over to her and put one arm around her neck.

"I hope daddy comes home soon," he said. "I know he would not let Mama drive you away."

"Don't you worry, dear boy," she soothed him gently. "If I leave, you and Phyllis go with me."

## Chapter 221

## "YOU HERE AGAIN?"

ITH A certain amount of anxiety, but none the less courageously, Marie awaited the moment when she would meet Alice, but hour after hour passed, and she neither saw her nor heard from her.

Finally Marie found that she had already retired. She was travel-worn and had retired early. She had not troubled herself about anything, had made no inquiries, not even about the children.

She had come to Oak Manor for the sole purpose of completing her wardrobe and to provide herself with all the articles which she thought requisite for the trip to the south which she was contemplating.

The free, irresponsible life she had been leading was exactly to her taste.

There was no one to call her to account for her actions or omissions, and there was no one whom she had to consider in anything she did.

By chance she had learned that Phil was at the copper mines in the West, and she took advantage of the opportunity to go to Oak Manor and prepare there for her trip.

It was rather late in the morning when she arose. After she had finished her toilet, she rang for the housekeeper, Mrs. Jenkins, to give her her orders.

She made several inquiries in regard to domestic affairs and finally touched upon the subject of the children.

"Has another tutor been engaged?" she asked

casually.

"A tutor? No, Mrs. Gordon, Miss Desmond is back," said Mrs. Jenkins.

Had a bomb been exploded near her, Alice could not have jumped up more hastily than she now did.

A dark, angry flush stole over her face which was distorted with rage.

"What—this person here again? Did my husband send for her?" she demanded.

"I don't think so. As far as I know, Miss Desmond came here quite unexpectedly and to everybody's delight," added the housekeeper with a malicious smile, for she knew that this would irritate Mrs. Gordon.

"Oh, so she has forced her way in?" hissed the latter "Just like her. She thought because I was not here, she could play mistress in the house again. Oh, I can see clearly through her intrigue.

"I know her little plans, but she is reckoning without her host this time," she laughed scornfully. "In any event, I will speak a few words with the woman. It is disgraceful that she was allowed to set foot in this house again!"

The housekeeper was quietly amused and pleased at Alice's rage.

She was thoroughly detested by the people in the house because fo her arrogant, tyrannical manner, and the housekeeper almost gloated over her annoyance and vexation.

At the same time, however, she felt an anxiety for Marie. That Mrs. Gordon would not tolerate her for a moment was clear; but what would happen to the poor children if Marie was to go?

An imperious gesture from Mrs. Gordon told her the interview was over.

Alice remained alone. Her face worked excitedly

and she nervously paced about the room.

The insolent creature, how could she have dared to do it had she not known that her return would be agreeable to Phil.

From the moment that this woman had come into the house, a barrier had risen between Phil and herself.

Through her acting and her clever coquetry, this governess had forced herself into Phil's heart and crowded her out if it.

And now, that she had succeded in loosening the tie which bound them, this adventuress was surely aiming to induce Phil to seek a divorce and take her place.

There could be no doubt of it, even now the children were on her side, and the people in the house would go through fire for her. And then Phil too, was simply idiotic in his admiration for this lovely creature.

She was now his present ideal of a woman, and without doubt he went about with the idea of making this Marie his wife as soon as he could secure a divorce from herself.

Probably the designing creature already presumed on the future and was playing the mistress even now.

Oh no! For the present at least, Alice was still Mrs. Gordon and Phil's wife, and as such she would teach the shameless hussy a lesson.

Alice took another long look at herself in the mirror and then swept out of her room.

Marie was in the children's room and had begun their daily instruction, when Mrs. Gordon suddenly came in.

She pretended astonishment. With eyes opened wide, she stood as if dumbfounded with amazement, and for a moment seemed to be speechless.

"What!" she cried at last in a shrill voice. "You

here again?"

The children sprang up with cries of fear and clung to their governess. The latter had risen quietly.

Her face betrayed nothing of what she felt at sight of the woman before her.

Proud and cold, she met the other woman's gaze. This icy composure almost maddened Alice.

"Go out!" she ordered the children, who at once left the room in hasty flight, glad of a chance for escape.

"I really cannot find words," hissed Alice as she faced the governess, "to express the disgust and loathing I feel at seeing you here!

"I never could have imagined that even you could have been so shameless and unprincipled as to slink your way into this house during my absence. You certainly cannot understand what the word "honor" means, if indeed you have ever heard it!"

"Mrs. Gordon, I must ask you to talk to me in a different manner." Marie protested. "You seem to forget with whom you are speaking!"

"Oh, really!" interjected Alice in biting tones. "I have never been more aware of it than at this moment. The air of virtue that you have assumed does not become you.

"If you had a spark of pride, you would not be here. It is the height of insolence for you to dare to enter this house again after all that happened.

"Did you think you could win your little game better while I was away, or do you believe I cannot see through your plans? Do you think that I do not know that you seek my husband's favor only to ensnare him?"

She had expected the governess would spring at her at this insult.

Instead she was smiling so peculiarly, so sarcas-

tically, that Alice could only stare at her open-mouthed. She was unprepared for this reception.

"You smile, do you?" she cried, her eyes blazing in her fury. "You seem to be sure of your game, but you have not yet won! I am still here.

"Phil Gordon is still my husband, and it rests with me whether I will release him or not. And if I do not, what then? I suppose, you will stay here as his mistress!" she ended with a hard, bitter laugh.

Marie's figure seemed to tower above her. She had remained quiet and composed, and thereby had an important advantage over the enraged Mrs. Gordon, who spoke with increasing excitement.

It would cost her but a word and she would be mistress here while the other would be forced to leave this very hour. But Marie did not speak the word.

She was silent for Phil's sake.

With unshakable composure, she returned:

"Your insults cannot touch me, Mrs. Gordon. I cannot feel myself hurt, as I simply have no intentions such as you insinuate. I came here on account of the children, after I had learned how cruelly they had been treated and how badly they were in need of someone who would care for them and give them love instead of hate!

"That is why I have come back, although it was hard for me to return to this house in which I have experienced so many mortifications through you."

"What are the children to you, and with what right do you meddle in their bringing up?" asked Alice sharply.

"With the right of a mother," was on Marie's lips, but she repressed the utterance in time.

"I love the children," she said softly, her voice trembling with emotion. "Whatever befalls them, good

or bad. I feel it doubly in my own heart. If I can only have them with me, I would be just as content to live away from Oak Manor."

In her agitation, she had almost forgotten to whom she was addressing these words.

Alice laughed scornfully.

"You are certainly an accomplished actress, I must admit," she cried. "You understand admirably how to win the father's heart when you outwardly seem to sacrifice yourself for his children. All the trouble here has come through you.

"You have played the role of an angel of light for my husband, and made me appear like a black sheep; but I will cut your part short, my fine lady! You pack your luggage to-day and leave the house at once, do you understand me?"

With the dignity befitting a queen, Marie replied:

"Very well, Mrs. Gordon, I will go."

Was there a tone of derision in the governess' words? Alice looked at her uneasily but Marie's bearing was unchanged. Her features grave and quiet.

Alice threw back her head and made her exit without another word.

If she had but known how petty and contemptible she had again appeared to Marie. If she had known what a pitiable part she was playing!

However, she returned to her room with a feeling of triumph, in the consciousness that she had shown herself the mistress of the situation; never suspecting, that in reality the governess had the absolute right to order her from the house.

When Alice had left her, Marie at once called Annie in to help her.

"I wish you would help me pack the trunks," she said. "I wish to leave to-day. I intend to take you and

the children with me as I have already planned. I am writing to Mr. Gordon so that he will be fully informed."

Annie gazed at her in frightened wonder.

"But what if Mrs. Gordon finds it out," she answered fearfully. "She will not let the children go with you."

"Of course not, Annie," came back quietly. "We must be careful. Say nothing to the children at present, but pack up the necessary things. Then you will go to town and order a taxi for eight o'clock this evening.

"It is to wait for us at the park gate. Tom and one of the men will help with the trunks, and I will follow with the children."

The girl nodded. Her eyes were now beaming.

She was pleased that she could stay with her mistress, for whom, indeed, she would have braved anything.

Without delay she went to work.

When Marie called the children back, they crept in, shy and timid, but then ran all the faster to her, holding her tightly.

"What did mama tell you, Miss Desmond?" they asked. "Was she cross again? You are not going away, are you? Oh no, you must not, we won't let you!"

The children continued their anxious examination. The anxiety which was shown by them went deep to Marie's heart. Bending over, she embraced them tenderly.

"No, my dear children, fear nothing," she said. "I will not leave you."

A blissful smile came over her face at the thought of the happiness she would have in the company of her children.

If the children had doubted her words before and thought them an evasion, Marie's smile reassured them

She gave them their morning lesson as usual so as not to excite them.

It was not until the afternoon that she went to her room secretly to attend to her packing, so that the children should notice nothing.

It did not take her long, and she waited for evening in feverish impatience.

Annie had faithfully done her part, and the taxi had been ordered.

What joy was the children's on hearing that they were to go away with Miss Desmond this very evening! She had not a little trouble to curb their excitement in order to guard against detection.

At last the time had come for the trunks to be brought down. Tom and his helper wondered over the quantity of the luggage.

Marie was with the children and Mrs. Jenkins in their room. Sobbingly, the latter embraced her and the children.

"Oh, when will we be all together again!" she moaned. "I will miss you terribly, Marie."

Marie consoled her as best she could, although she, herself, did not know when, if ever, she would return.

Finally she took the children by the hand, and slipped down the stairs with them without being seen.

The servants were at supper as Marie had calculated. She passed out of the mansion with the children unnoticed.

She taken care also that the men who put the luggage in the taxi should suspect nothing. For this reason, Annie appeared as usual in her house-dress.

When the trunks had been brought down, she sent the men up again to get a hat box which she thought must have been forgotten in Miss Desmond's room.

This, however, was not the case.

Meantime, Marie had already left the house, but did not at once take the road to the gate.

Instead, as arranged with Annie, she waited behind a thick hedge of shrubbery until the men had disappeared within the house.

Then she ran with the children as fast as she could to the gate, and was quickly inside the automobile.

When the men came back to report that they could not find the hat box, Annie and the taxi were no longer there.

Marie could not suppress a feeling of bitterness as she threw a last look at the lighted windows of the mansion.

Although this was her home, she was flying out into the world with her children like an outlaw, but she thanked God that, at least, she had her darlings at her side.

While this was taking place, Mrs. Gordon was in the dining room alone at supper.

The wind rattled against the windows and howled weirdly through the chimney.

Alice was unaccustomed to being alone. She felt chilled and drew her wrap closer about her shoulders.

She could not bear this for long. As soon as possible she would go, in any case before Phil returned. The housekeeper entered.

"Has the governess gone?" she asked shortly of the latter.

"Yes, Mrs. Gordon. Tom just brought her baggage down," was the prompt reply.

Alice smiled malignantly. She had driven her away.

When Phil returned, he would not find her here, and she did not think that the governess would venture

a third time to intrude herself at Oak Manor.

Thoroughly satisfied, Alice retired for the night.

Her feelings in the morning, when the housekeeper, smilingly reported to her: "Mrs. Gordon, Miss Desmond, without saying anything to anyone, has taken Annie and the children with her," can well be imagined.

Several minutes passed before Alice grasped the full import of what she had heard.

"Taken the children away?" she cried. "This is too much—this caps all her previous performances!"

She actually struggled for breath in her rage. Finaly she broke into a forced laugh.

"You got away with it, Miss Desmond, or whatever your name may be," she hissed. "Well, you are going to regret it. You gave me an unexpected chance to remove you for good."

As she leaned back in her chair there was plain murder in her eyes.

## Chapter 222

## HAPPY LOVERS

IN THIS chapter we must take the reader back to Quebec, Canada to witness a scene less unpleasant than that described in the foregone chapter. Lillian Crawford, in her overwhelming gratitude toward Margaret Wentworth, was determined to bring the latter and her lover together. Her first move had been to visit Gerard Mirabeau's mother.

The interview terminated most happily, for the dear old French woman eagerly gave her consent to the plan originated by Lillian.

According to this plan the young artist was to be induced to call at the home of the Sanders, where Margaret Wentworth and Lillian Crawford were staying.

It was still early in the evening as Lillian went in search of Ethel Sanders and found the latter in her boudoir.

"Oh, there you are," she cried, running up to the young girl and taking both of her hands in hers. "I have been looking for you for almost an hour. I want you to do something for me, will you?"

"Of course, I will," Ethel answered readily. "What is it?"

Lillian drew an envelope from her bosom and drew from it a carefully folded sheet of perfumed paper.

"Here is a message from Mrs. Mirabeau, Gerard's mother," she explained. "I told you yesterday what I am trying to do. Gerard will call within an hour and ask to see Miss Gunther.

"You must contrive to get Margaret into the

drawing room. See to it that no one else enters for at least an hour. Let only Gerard be admitted."

Miss Sander's eyes flashed comprehensively. She understood at once.

"You can depend on me to do my part," she replied with a mischievous laugh. "You can bet that no one shall disturb the lovers in the drawing room. I'll be the watch dog at the door."

"Thank you, Ethel," Lillian said, while she uttered an inward prayer for the success of her strategy.

The conspirators heartily clasped hands.

It was not long before the bell rang. The maid opened the door for a handsome young man who inquired for Miss Gunther.

She took him to the door of the drawing room and requested him to enter. Following Lillian's instructions, she did not announce him.

In the bay window, Margaret Wentworth sat at a table, occupied with a work on art, whose contents she was devouring, for among the illustrations, there were pictures by Gerard Mirabeau.

The door opened suddenly.

Margaret saw a man enter, but could not see his features as a portiere darkened the entrance.

Somewhat vexed by this intrusion, she arose, imagining it was a visitor for one of the guests, and it would be best to go out.

The next moment two cries rang through the room.

"Gerard——!"

"Margaret——!"

Never before did one word express so much of mingled joy and grief.

Fear and confidence, and, greater than all, love unutterable were blended in its eloquent tones.

Speechless, they faced each other.

He studied her sweet eyes as if to pentrate into her very soul with all the fond scrutiny of a love which cannot see enough of the thing it loves.

The girl, lowered those eyes as if shamed what he might see only too plainly. Impulsively, Margaret covered her face with her hands.

In uncontrollable anguish she faltered tremulously:

"Oh, Gerard, what must you think of me, how you must have hated me!"

"Hated you? Can you believe such a thing, Margaret?" His voice vibrated with agitation.

"Yes, you must have hated me, perhaps despised me," sobbed Margaret, glad that she could roll away the burden which like a stone, had weighed down her heart for so long.

"How terribly I hurt you. How could I have been so blind as to misjudge you so! But that evening I did not know what I was doing, I was out of my senses.

"What I heard about your relation to Mrs. Wallace, pierced my heart like an arrow, and it is a wonder that I did not lose my mind altogether. No words can tell what I have suffered since that evening.

"But soon doubts arose in my mind over what I had heard, and when finally I learned of the marriage of that woman with another, and it was thus proven that what I had overheard was either gossip or base slander, you cannot imagine my feelings.

"Gerard—Gerard!" she cried, "only tell me that you forgive me, that you do not despise me for having so little faith in you!"

"I forgave you long ago, Margaret," he said. "You had my full forgiveness before you asked it."

Continued in next number

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